

Message Text

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46

ACTION SS-30

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R 131120Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6098

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 6700

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINGS PINT CB

SUBJECT: INTERNAL POLITICS AND TEACHER/STUDENT AGITATION

REFS: A. PHNOM PENH 6588

B. PHNOM PENH 6589

C. PHNOM PENH 6699

1. SUMMARY. SOUNDINGS WITH GOVERNMENT AND PARTY LEADERS HAVE SERVED TO CONFIRM OUR SUSPICIONS THAT THE THREAT OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TAKING TO THE STREETS HAS BEEN USED BY CERTAIN SOCIO-REPUBLICAN POLITICIANS TO ATTEMPT TO BRING ABOUT CABINET CHANGES. TO THOSE CONCERNED WE HAVE EMPHASIZED THE ADVERSE EFFECTS SUCH POLITICAL MANEUVERING COULD HAVE ON THE GKR'S IMAGE IN THE U.S. AND IN THE U.N. AND HAVE IN TURN RECEIVED ASSURANCES THAT IT WILL BE STOPPED.

2. IN FRANK EXCHANGES WITH POLMIL COUNSELOR ON MAY 11, SOCIO-REPUBLICAN SECRETARY-GENERAL AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VICE PRESIDENT PAN SOTHI UNINTENTIONALLY REVEALED THAT HE WAS A SOURCE OF THE CHARGES (WHICH NO OTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US SUBSTANTIATES) THAT THE REPUBLICAN PARTY HAS SUBSIDIZED STUDENT AGITATION IN AN EFFORT TO UNSEAT PRESIDENT LON NOL. PAN SOTHI LIKEWISE INDICATED

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THAT HE AND HIS SOCIO-REPUBLICAN COLLEAGUES BELIEVE THAT

CHANGES IN THE PRESENT CABINET WILL BE REQUIRED TO REGAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE "MASSES SUFFERING FROM INFLATION."

3. SOTHI'S COMMENTS SEEMED TO SUBSTANTIATE REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM ANUMBER OF OTHER SOURCES THAT HE IS ACTIVELY SEEKING TO REPLACE PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET, WHOM HE HAS ACCUSED OF "SOFTNESS" TOWARDS THE REPUBLICANS. WE, THEREFORE, EMPHASIZED TO HIM THAT SCRAPPING OF THE CURRENT COALITION AND CABINET WOULD GREATLY ERODE THE SUPPORT COMBODIA REQUIRES WITHIN THE U.S. TO OBTAIN NECESSARY ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO RETAIN ITS U.N. SEAT. AMBASSADOR SUBSEQUENTLY MADE MUCH THE SAME POINTS WITH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT TAN KIM HUON. WE ALSO SUGGESTED TO PAN SOTHI THAT, IN LIGHT OF REPUBLICAN ACQUIESCENCE IN PARLIAMENT'S RESUMPTION OF ITS LEGISLATIVE ROLE, SOCIO-REPUBLICAN DEMANDS THAT REPUBLICAN NIMISTERS RESPOND PERSONALLY TO PARILIAMENT'S INTERPELLATION SEEMED TO PLACE NEEDLESS STRAIN ON PRESENT COALITION.

4. ON MAY 13 PAN SOTHI INFORMED US THAT POLITICAL SUB-COMMITTEE OF SOCIO-REPUBLICAN CENTRAL COMMITTEE HAD MET TO CONSIDER POINTS WE HAD MADE AND AGREED THAT THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR A CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT. THEY NEVERTHE- LESS WISH TO PROPOSE THAT, SHORT OF RESHUFFLING THE CABINET, A FEW "GOOD MEN" BE GIVEN PORTFOLIOS TO STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT. WE NOTED THAT ANY CABINET CHANGES AT THIS MOMENT WOULD UNLEASH A HOST OF AMBITIONS AND FEARS WITHIN BOTH PARTIES AND SUGGESTED THAT SOCIO-REPUBLICANS CONCEN- TRATE ON FINDING SOLUTIONS TO GOVERNMENT'S PROBLEMS WHICH COULD BE USED BY PRESENT CABINET. SOTHI AGREED TO PURSEU THIS LINE WITHIN HIS CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

5. PAN SOTHI SAID POLITICAL SUBCOMMITTEE HAS ALSO AGREED THAT PARLIAMENT SHOUD NO LONGER ATTEMPT TO INTERPELLATE REPUBLICAN MINSTERS. THE SUBCOMMITTEE, HOWEVER, WISHES THE PRESIDENT AND SIRIK MATAK TO MEET WITH THEIR PRINCIPAL AIDES TO DEFINE MORE CLEARLY PARLIAMENT'S ROLE. COMMENT: IF PARLIAMENT ACCEDS TO GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST FOR SPECIAL POWERS (REF C) SOME ADDITIONAL DELINEATION OF PARLIAMENT'S SECRET

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ROLE WILL IN FACT BE REQUIRED.

6. MINISTER OF EDUCATION KEO SANGKOM TOLD US ON MAY 13 THAT PRESSURES FROM CERTAIN POLITICAL PARTY ELEMENTS HAD LED HIM TO SUBMIT HIS RESIGNATION TO THE PRIME MINSTER. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT AIM OF CHALLENGERS, WHOM HE DID NOT NAME, IS TO OBTAIN COMPLETE CABINET CHANGE RATHER THAN ONE PORTFOLIO. SANGKIM SAID PRIME MINISTER HAS NOT ACCEPTED HIS RESIGNA-

TION AND THAT HE NOW PLANS TO REMAIN IN THE CABINET.
SAMGKIM WAS PLEASED TO LEARN OF EMBASSY'S VIEWS ON POSSIBLE
CONSEQUENCES OF SCRAPPING PRESENT CABINET BECAUSE HE CLAIMED
CHALLENGERS ARE IMPLYING THEY HAVE U.S. SUPPORT.

7. COMMENT: THIS IS ANOTHER DISMAYING INSTANCE OF KHMER
POLITICIANS PLACING THEIR PERSONAL INTERESTS ABOVE THOSE
OF THE NATION. WE ARE IN PARTICULAR DISAPPOINTED WITH PAN
SOTHI, WHO HAS PLAYED A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN THE PAST. WE
BELIEVE THAT OUR INTERVENTIONS HAVE NOW REDUCED HIS AND
OTHERS' AMBITIONS TO LESS HARMFUL PROPORTIONS.
DEAN

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